

# AN ABANDONED MOUNTAIN DEITY

Limusishiden

(Li Dechun 李得春, Qinghai University Attached Medical College)<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>

*Lasizi* are cairns where mountain deities dwell, and the same word<sup>3</sup> also refers to the deities that dwell in these cairns. There are many *lasizi* in Tu areas in Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, Haidong Municipality, Qinghai Province. The most famous are:

- Chileb, located in the north part of both Danma Town and Donggou Township
- Durizang, located in the northern part of Wushi Town
- Lawa, located atop a mountain on the border between Danma Town and Wushi Town. The mountain is referred to as Lawa Lasizi. Lawa Village is located at the foot of Lawa Lasizi's west side, which is within Danma Town territory. Tughuan Village is located at the foot of Lawa Lasizi's east side, which belongs is within Wushi Town jurisdiction.
- Sughua, located atop a mountain on the border between Danma Town and Dongshan Township. The mountain is locally known as Sughua Lasizi. Qighaan Dawa Village is located at the foot of Sughua Lasizi's west side, which is part of Dongshan Township. Sughua Village is located at the foot of Sughua Lasizi's east side, which is part of belongs Danma Town.
- Walighuan, located atop a mountain<sup>4</sup> in Hongyazigou Township and Sunduu, located on the border between Songduo and Bazha (two autonomous Tibetan townships in Huzhu County) and Ledu Region.

---

<sup>1</sup> I thank AHP editors and Gabriela Samcewicz for editing assistance.

<sup>2</sup> Tibetan = *lab tse*. Mongghul do not use the the Mongolian term *oboo*.

<sup>3</sup> Haidong Region became Haidong Municipality in 2013.

<sup>4</sup> The term 'Walighuan Lasizi' is used to refer to this mountain.

On the first, eighth, and fifteenth days of the first and second lunar months, Mongghul visit a particular *lasizi* as indicated by their *purghan* 'deity' where they offer juniper branches and make prostrations in all directions.

There are, to my knowledge, no female mountain deities in Huzhu.

*Lasizi* are built atop mountains, at mountain passes, and (only rarely) in plain areas. *Lasizi* commonly feature a hollow square stone base rimmed by a low wooden railing. Many poles resembling arrows and spears are thrust into this base. Sacred cloth and sheep wool are strung from the *lasizi*, which are consecrated to Heaven and various deities, particularly mountain deities. Paper money and coins are placed as offerings among the poles and in the hollow base.

Most Mongghul youth worship *lasizi* but, they can say very little when asked to explain what a *lasizi* is and why people worship them by burning juniper branches and roasted highland barley flour, offering wooden poles, hanging sacred cloth from the poles, circumambulating, and prostrating.

Shge Tingere 'Great Heaven' or 'Great Sky' is also an important local concept. If Mongghul are suddenly confronted with difficulty, they often call for help from Shge Tingere. Burning juniper branches and making prostrations in the four directions atop a mountain or hill are believed to be especially efficacious because such a location is closer to Heaven. This explains why Mongghul are more concerned with Shge Tingere than mountain deities when they worship at a *lasizi* on a mountain peak. For example, Mughua Peak is located behind my natal home in Tughuan Village. Both men and women<sup>5</sup> from Tughuan and nearby Pudang villages visit, burn juniper branches, and prostrate, worshipping all deities regardless of the presence of a *lasizi*. Worship at a *lasizi* is not only dedicated to a mountain deity - Heaven is the first focus.

Once a year from about 1984-1988, my father led my older brother and me to a mountain peak (4,200 meters) in the Chileb Mountains, where we worshipped at the area's most well-known

---

<sup>5</sup> Women do not go to *lasizi* because of taboos surrounding menstruation.

*lasizi* on the first day of the first lunar month. We left at about three a.m., arrived at the foot of the Chileb Mountains at about nine a.m. as sunshine began shining from behind the peaks and mid-parts of the mountain range. We rested and then climbed until we reached our destination at about eleven a.m. After offering *szang*<sup>6</sup> and piously making prostrations in the four directions, we descended the mountains and arrived home at about five p.m. in the late afternoon. A major motivation for this mountaintop visit was that my father wanted my brother and me to pass the university entrance examinations, which he felt would lead to official jobs and a secure life. It was also an activity, a place, and the time to better ensure that all endeavours would go well for our family in the coming year by beseeching Heaven and all the deities, and offering sacrifices.

People are unafraid of a *lasizi* if they go there to worship; however, they are apprehensive when passing by on ordinary occasions. It is believed that peoples' souls can be easily 'captured', which is evident by a person becoming ill. To avert this, people should shout, "*Lasizi garuu yarashiduu!* Elevating the pure mountain summit!" and a few stones collected from below the *lasizi*, should then be added to an ever-growing pile of rocks by the *lasizi*. This glorifies the *lasizi*, delighting the resident deity. Moving stones up to the *lasizi* means that good luck is bestowed by the *lasizi*.

There are no mountain deity *thanka*<sup>7</sup> in monasteries in Huzhu Tu areas that Mongghul visit.

A *lasizi* is a sacred site. Consequently, urinating and defecating nearby are taboo. Removing stones, poles, trees, soil, and offerings is also forbidden. Those who remove such items are in danger of becoming ill. To illustrate this, I give the following two accounts. The first is related to a *lasizi* in Qanzua Village, Wushi Town. This *lasizi* is located at a mountain pass. It has no special name. Locals call it simply Lasizi.

---

<sup>6</sup> Tibetan = *bsang*. Burning juniper branches and roasted highland barley flour for deities who, it is believed, consume the odor of burnt offerings.

<sup>7</sup> Tibetan = *thang ga*, religious art generally of a Tibetan nature that may be painted, appliqued, or embroidered.

### Account One

A pious local Mongghul family offered a goat to the *lasizi*. The head of the family led the goat to the *lasizi*, offered szang, made prostrations, and said, "Dear Lasizi, you are our protector. You watch over us. My family now offers a goat to you in gratitude." Thereafter, the goat was considered sacred and the property of the *lasizi*. It wandered on the mountains wherever it liked.

One night, three idle young men were in a village lane of Gumang Village, Wushi Town and noticed the sacred goat walking nearby. The three talked about it and then secretly killed, cooked, and ate the goat. A few days later, one of them suddenly fell unconscious. His family consulted the village deity and learned that he had slaughtered the sacred goat, which had infuriated the *lasizi* who had then caused the young man to become ill. His family then went to the *lasizi* and offered a new goat, and beseeched the *lasizi* by offering sacred cloth, burned a large amount of incense, and made many prostrations. After several such visits, the young man's condition improved, but his speech remained slurred and his left arm and leg were so weak that he needed a walking stick for the remainder of his life.

### Account Two

In the 1960s, a woman from Huarin Village, Danma Town was returning to her husband's home after visiting her parents. She carried her toddler on her back and carried a basket with bread and other gifts her parents had given her. She hurried because the sun was rapidly setting. When she walked through a mountains pass where a *lasizi* was located, she had a very strong urge to urinate. Thinking she had already put some distance between herself and the *lasizi*, she urinated in a secluded place and then went on home.

Late that night, she suddenly screamed. Her family members were awakened and rushed to her bed. Her face was covered with sweat and she was speaking incoherently. Guessing that her condition might have some relationship with her recent journey, the family consulted their *purghan*. They then learned that she had been caught by a *lasizi*. When they asked the woman, they learned that she had urinated near the *lasizi*.

Early the next morning her family went to the *lasizi* where they tied sacred cloth and sheep wool, burned a large incense

offering, and prostrated. When they returned home the woman had returned to normal.

In 2014, increasing numbers of young Mongghul live most of the year in cities where they can find work. Equipped with mobile phones, they become distracted by modern technologies and have little regular contact with many Mongghul traditions. The following story reflects what was happening in the Huzhu Tu area in the early twenty-first century.

## AN ABANDONED MOUNTAIN DEITY

Strong late-afternoon sunbeams glint through the pine trees, striking Nuri Lasizi,<sup>8</sup> which sits on the shady side of a mountain. The mountains and valleys are quiet, except for the sound of wind-rustled grass clinging to the sides of the slopes, and the gentle whisper of pine branches softly brushing against each other.

I, the deity of Nuri Mountain, have just returned home from a long journey, which I had taken to try and dispel my recent sorrows. I dismount from my white horse, withdraw my long-handled sword from its scabbard, and sit on a clump of feathery grass. I pull my long pipe from my sash, fill the pipe bowl with tobacco from my tobacco bag, and start smoking. I look into the distance, searching for my home, Nuri Lasizi. It is not built atop a mountain, as most *lasizi* are. Instead, it sits on a ridge fifty meters from the mountaintop. It is rimmed by upper and lower wood railing. Red and yellow sacred cloth is wound around each side of the small, simple square *lasizi*. A three-meter long spear is thrust into the *lasizi*. Many shorter poles resembling arrows and spears surround that long spear. An altar for offering incense<sup>9</sup> is in front. It is newly built after having been accidentally set on fire by a young villager in 2009. He had come to burn incense to inform me that he would soon marry. He burned juniper branches, prostrated, and then left quickly. However, the wind picked up, fanning the smoldering offerings into bright flickering flames that burned the *lasizi* frame, reducing it to nothing but a big pile of ash.

I was angry, but I didn't punish the young man because his mistake was not intentional. Three days later, the young man's family invited three monks from Rgulang Monastery<sup>10</sup> to chant for three days by the *lasizi*. The family later rebuilt the *lasizi*, which delighted me. They even used fragrant, high quality pinewood in building the *lasizi*,

---

<sup>8</sup> Nuri (Jijialing) Village is located on the southern border of today's Dongshan Township, Huzhu Tu Autonomous County. *Nuri* means 'ridge' in Mongghul.

<sup>9</sup> Nuri Mountain Deity enjoys liquor. Local Chinese devotees offer Nuri Mountain Deity roosters, which many Mongghul never do.

<sup>10</sup> Youning, Dgon lung dgon pa.

which made me even happier. The new *lasizi* was smaller than the older version. The many poles resembling arrows and spears that had been thrust into the altar had all been burned by the fire. This had been the largest and most well-known *lasizi* in Naringhual Valley.<sup>11</sup>

Several green pine trees grow at the *lasizi*'s southwest side. They are so huge and thick that it takes two adult men to reach around them. Some forest workers investigated the age of these huge pines in about the year 2000, by inserting a metal probe in one of the thick trees, removing a core, and counting the rings. To me, it seems like only yesterday, not half a millennium ago, that the trees were tiny seedlings.

Nuri Lasizi (16 June 2013, Limusishiden).



<sup>11</sup> Located in today's Dongshan Township in Huzhu County, the Mongghul population is more than seventy-five percent of the township's total population. It has the highest percentage of Mongghul of any township or town in the county.

Nuri Lasizi (16 June 2013, Limusishiden).



### I PROTECT MY FOLLOWERS

I don't know exactly how long I've lived on this mountain, but it's been at least five centuries. Long ago, the territory of the Seven Valleys<sup>12</sup> was formed in our Mongghul area. To further consolidate, strengthen, and demarcate the Seven Valleys region, the powerful deity, Baghari,<sup>13</sup> from Rgulang Monastery, asked three monks to come to today's Nuri area to establish a *lasizi* to protect local Mongghul people and to demarcate his territory. With support from local Mongghul, Baghari Spear Deity began searching for a site for a

---

<sup>12</sup> 'Duluun Lunkuang' (literally: 'seven valleys' or 'seven jurisdictions') refers to the territory administered by Rgulang Lamasery before 1949. Residents within the territory are thought to all be Mongghul. Danma, Wushi, Donggou, Dongshan (Naringhuali), Weiyuan, and Dala (located in today's Ledu Region); and Xunrang Township (located in Datong Hui and Tu Autonomous County) are the seven valleys.

<sup>13</sup> A well-known deity and rival of the Tibetan epic hero, King Gesar, Baghari is worshipped by Mongghul. It is strictly taboo for those who venerate Baghari (also known as King Foorigisigari) to sing Gesar songs and display his images inside or outside their homes and in temples. Rgulang Monastery houses Baghari in its Zankang (Btsan khang) 'spirit hall'.

new *lasizi*. A monk spirit medium,<sup>14</sup> trailed by several other monks and a number of men and boys, climbed the slope with cypress twigs to the mountain top and then prostrated three times to Baghari in *purghan* form, who was held in the hands of another monk, standing close to the monk spirit medium. The spirit medium held a volume of Buddhist scripture, sat on the ground, closed his eyes, all the time chanting indistinctly, inviting Baghari to possess him. Suddenly, Baghari possessed him, and he rose to his feet. His head and upper body shook, and he grew increasingly agitated.

The local villagers knelt and one asked the medium where the exact site was for building a *lasizi*. The medium madly danced, working himself into a frenzy, while waving his volume of scripture and shouting. When standing on the southern ridge about fifty meters below the peak of Nuri Mountain, he suddenly bellowed, "The *lasizi*'s location is here! The *lasizi*'s location is here!" The villagers marked the site by driving a wooden stake into the ground at the medium's feet.

The exhausted medium gradually came out of trance, put down his volume of scriptures, and again prostrated three times to Baghari. The monks instructed the local villagers to dig a hole about one meter deep. After chanting, the monks produced a porcelain vase with colored threads tied around its neck. Filled with Buddhist scriptures, the vase was put in the hole. Wheat seed, peas, cypress twigs, butter, white oats, pieces of silk cloth, and small amounts of gold, silver, agate, and pearl were sprinkled around the vase. Then, the hole was filled. Villagers next built a wooden railing around where they had buried the vase. A male representative of each Nuri Village household offered a spear or sword, and tied sacred cloth to the new

<sup>14</sup> A *hguriden* (T: *sku rten*) is a spirit medium for *purghan* (*pram*). A *purghan* is a deity represented in the form of a sedaned image or a cloth-covered pole held by four men or a man, respectively. The local Han term for *hguriden* is *fala*. The *hguriden* burns incense and prostrates to the *purghan* in the home of the family that invites him. The *purghan* then possesses him. While in trance, people ask questions and he responds. The *hguriden* does not remember what happened during the time he was in trance. He wears a red or green Chinese-style upper garment tied by two or three pieces of red or green cloth around his waist. *Hguriden* are able to identify evils while in trance.

*lasizi*.

Local villagers planted pine trees brought from the mountains of Rgulang Monastery around the *lasizi*. This mountain where they built a *lasizi* was thereafter considered a sacred site.

Afterwards, Baghari selected me from among hundreds of thousands of deities to be a guardian deity for the new Nuri *lasizi*. Baghari said to me, "You are the best candidate to be the deity of Nuri Lasizi. I trust you and feel lucky to choose you! The people here are all Mongghul. This place is located high in the mountains. Drought and hail are common, but you must prevent them from harming local people. Do not let them suffer from these disasters. Ensure that they have a safe, happy life by having good harvests, abundant livestock, prosperity, and peace."

"Nuri Village is located at the southern end of the Seven Valleys. Other ethnic groups live nearby. This *lasizi* marks the border between Mongghul people's territory, and that which belongs to others. Please help Mongghul people and ensure that they do not become absorbed into other ethnic groups. Do not allow others to move into and live in Mongghul villages! These are your duties!"

Since that time, I have been faithfully carrying out my mission. I know my position. I'm a mountain deity for Mongghul people here, and also for the Seven Valleys region. My *lasizi* was personally established by Baghari at the border between the lands of the Mongghul and other people.

Countless times have I successfully repelled hailstones and floods that would have struck crops and villagers in Nuri. Many times I have brought nourishing rain to Nuri when drought struck. Thus, I fulfilled my duties.

A Mongghul man from Nuri, named Changshuubog, was once herding horses in Xiaochanggou, which belongs to people who are not Mongghul. Several Xiaochanggou men came, beat him, and stole his long woolen bag. At that time, people were very poor, and that woolen bag was quite valuable. He cried out to me. I heard and immediately went there. I realized he had been beaten and robbed. I was angry and immediately caused one of the Xiaochanggou men to have such a bellyache that he rolled on the ground and fell into a deep

ravine. The other men pulled him out and took him to their village, where he continued to experience great pain. Later, they learned from a local *fashi* 'master of magic' that I had punished him. The man's father soon came to my *lasizi*, returned the woolen bag, sacrificed a rooster to me, and asked for forgiveness. I didn't agree and the ailing man later died.

Another time, a Chinese carpenter from Shuiwan Village came to build a house in Nuri. When he finished his work, he dug out a small pine tree from near my *lasizi* and took it to his home. Later that night, as he sat inside his home, he heard stones clattering on his roof. He climbed up there, but saw and heard nothing unusual. When he went back inside, he heard the same sound, which continued day and night. He consulted a local *fashi*, who said that I was making problems for him. He immediately remembered that he had taken a small pine tree from the Nuri *lasizi* area just before he returned from the village to his home. He and the *fashi* then came to the *lasizi* together, re-planted the pine tree at its former location, sacrificed a rooster to me, burned incense sticks, and kowtowed. I still didn't forgive him. I ensured that later he, and all his family members, died from diseases. I need to protect my property and my people as Baghari from Rgulang Monastery commanded.

Another time, in about 1953, more than twenty young local non-Mongghul men from Xiaochanggou came to my *lasizi* late at night to cut pine trees, so they could build a livestock compound in their village. I awoke, and saw those young men sitting among the pine trees, smoking and whispering. They were reluctant to steal pine trees from around the *lasizi* because that is my place and they knew that I am ferocious and powerful. I angrily summoned a strong black wind to blow through the forest from the west. The thieves were frightened and then truly believed that I was a living deity. They fled down the mountain and told others, spreading the news about me everywhere.

In the past, two very wealthy, arrogant outsiders – Huo Qilang and Zhao Balang – lived in Ganjiabu, which neighbors Nuri. They owned a lot of farmland and had many livestock. They did not believe in me. When Mongghul invited monks to Nuri Lasizi to chant

scriptures to praise me and make me happy, the two rich men lay on their house roof, facing the *lasizi*. When they saw Mongghul gathering there and busily engaged in rituals, they insulted them by puffing opium smoke in the direction of the *lasizi*. Their behavior enraged local Mongghul, who went to their village temple and told their village deity that they could no longer tolerate such bullies. Then they took the Baghari spear to Nuri Lasizi, carried it around the *lasizi* three times, and cursed the men to depart the area within three years. This was exactly what happened. Within three years, the two bullies moved away after their houses burned down and many of their livestock and some of their family members had died.

I ardently love my people, particularly boys. One summer day, a group of naked Nuri boys busily dug into some beehives in my *lasizi* to collect honey. The bees were disturbed, flew out, and stung the children, who beat the bees with their naked arms. Some boys fled, covering their heads with their arms as countless bees pursued them. I found this very entertaining and watched with interest as the boys and the bees fought. Then a village man came, shouted at the boys to stopping pestering the bees in the *lasizi*, and mercilessly drove them away. I was unhappy. Boys should enjoy their lives. If boys are happy, I am also happy. I summoned my dog<sup>15</sup> and ordered it to take revenge. My dog raced off and killed the old man's grandson. Afterwards, I felt guilty about that.

I have never allowed women from Nuri to come to my *lasizi*.

#### NURI VILLAGE'S DRAMATIC TRANSFORMATION

Life in Nuri has changed considerably in the last two decades. Fewer and fewer Nuri residents stay in the village. The number of livestock has been greatly reduced. More and more fields are left untended. Few villagers come to the *lasizi* to burn juniper branches and venerate me. The whole area has become desolate. What's wrong? I decided to investigate. I left my palace, started off east of the *lasizi*,

---

<sup>15</sup> Wolves are believed to be mountain deities' dogs.

walked down a steep path, and saw households built on high slopes near a big deep ravine, where three hamlets are located. I first visited Tanzi, where about twenty families live. I went to the first household on the village's upper side and saw uncovered water cisterns outside the household's courtyard gate. The cisterns were full of dry clods and green grass grew out of them. I realized the people in this house had been gone for a long time. The front gate was secured with a rusty old lock. I went over the courtyard wall and saw that the wood rooms surrounding the courtyard had collapsed. All the furniture was decayed. Weeds grew here and there. An overpowering stench made me leave quickly.

Locked front courtyard gates and weeds growing everywhere told me two other homes that I passed by were also abandoned. A house built against a hill had a half-open courtyard gate. I walked inside and saw a woman drawing water from a cistern located in a corner of the courtyard. She was using a long rope tied to a rubber container. A six- or seven-year-old boy was busy munching on a piece of bread that a lamb was also keenly interested in. The lamb walked near the boy, who threatened it by thrusting out his arm. The lamb ignored this and reached out with its mouth open. The boy ran away but the lamb chased him. The boy cried and asked his mother to help. His mother laughed until the lamb gave up and walked to its mother's side as the ewe chewed straw. I was delighted by this wonderful scene, and then left to visit another home, where only an old couple and their granddaughter lived.

The old woman was cooking over a fire of wheat straw. The old man was feeding swine with plants he had collected on the mountains. Their little granddaughter was intently watching TV. I guessed the old couple's son and daughter-in-law were doing seasonal work outside the village.

I left Tanzi and went to Shuulen Hamlet. There were only eight households there, and half of them were empty. The remaining ones were mostly inhabited by old people and young children.

I then went to Duuja Hamlet. I didn't enter all the homes. I just watched from atop a steep hill behind the hamlet. Rising smoke from the house kitchen chimneys told me supper was being cooked.

Nearly half of the households were vacant.

It was already dark when I reached the last hamlet in this valley – Kudila – which has thirty-two households. Seeing some lights in one home, I went there and entered their guest room where two old grannies were sitting on the sleeping platform. They leaned against folded quilts and sipped black tea. One was Sangjinsuu and the other was Jiransuu. Sangjinsuu said, "Please come have supper with me every night if you like. We can cook and eat together. You are alone in your home and I'm the same."

Jiransuu replied, "Good idea. Every night I feel very lonely after supper. I don't like watching TV. I don't know much Chinese, particularly the Chinese they speak on TV. I enjoy chatting with you."

Sangjinsuu continued, "I feel lonely every time my family members leave for seasonal work. During the daytime it's OK, because it's green outside, which makes me forget my loneliness."

Jiransuu said, "When I stay busy, I feel fine. When I have nothing to do, I feel very lonely."

"A number of young couples have moved away from here to live in Xining, the nearest big city. The remaining ones stay outside doing seasonal work for nearly the entire year. What will become of our Nuri if this continues?" lamented Sangjinsuu.

"Everyone will leave," replied Jiransuu with sadness. Have you heard that the government plans to relocate Nuri Village to the plain in Tangchuan Town, a local Han Chinese area? We will have to live with them."

Sangjinsuu said, "Someone told me that a new policy will force people living on mountains and in remote valleys to move to areas in the plains. Our village will move there a couple of years later."

Jiransuu protested, "I don't want to live there. I like our Nuri. Our people have been living here for centuries."

"Young people like to live down on the plains, because then it's easier for them to go out to earn money. That new site is near Xining City and Weiyuan Town, the seat of our Huzhu County. Transportation is convenient. All the homes have tap water, while we have to draw water from a well here. On the plains, people don't

worry about hailstorms, floods, and droughts, which are common here. People who live on the plains no longer depend on farming but, instead, work in factories and enterprises. They probably have an easier life there," Sangjinsuu explained.

"Yes, but what will happen to our temple and Nuri Lasizi if we move?" Jiransuu asked.

"People say that the government will allow us to build a new temple for our deity if we go to the plains, but I don't know about Nuri Lasizi!" Sangjinsuu said.

Jiransuu again protested, "We can't move it. I never heard of moving a *lasizi* to another place. Maybe it will just be left here."

Sangjinsuu agreed, "The *lasizi* should stay here forever. If it is gone, young people won't go honor him anymore after our generation leaves this world. We are old! That will be soon! What a pity! Ferocious, devoted Nuri Mountain Deity has protected us for countless years. Now his people mercilessly abandon him."

Jiransuu said, "I feel sad for my dear Nuri Mountain Deity."

Tears streaked the two elderly women's faces. For a long while they stopped talking, and wiped tears from their wrinkled faces.

My heart hurt. Brushing away my own tears with my sleeves, I left that household where I had heard such a heartbreakng conversation.

I returned to my *lasizi* and went to bed. Tossing and turning, I couldn't sleep. I got up early the next morning, and decided to visit some other hamlets. I went north to another deep valley. More than forty households live in Wachuang Hamlet, located on a steep southeast slope. I saw rising smoke from a household chimney, which was detached from other homes. Sure that people were living there, I went in through the front gate. Two chained dogs were barking in the courtyard. I also saw two rooms built on the south and east sides of the compound. A small rectangular garden plot was built in the courtyard center. Peonies and pomegranates blossomed colorfully. A pine tree grew at each corner of the garden plot. It was very clean in the courtyard and inside the rooms. A young man lay in bed, barely able to move his head. His mother, Limuxji, had to turn him over regularly, feed him, and clean him when he defecated and urinated.

He murmured, but no one understood what he said, except Limuxji, who could interpret some of his utterances.

When he was a baby, he had had a fever and was taken to a local, family-run clinic in Tangchuan Town. His future changed dramatically after being given an intravenous injection. He never got out of bed again. Limuxji stayed at home alone, caring for him. She also did farm work while her husband did seasonal work in Xining City. A younger son studied in Dongshan Town Middle School. The disabled son was the only thing that kept Limuxji in the village.

As I left Limuxji's home, I saw a woman weeding a field with a long-handled hoe. She was the only person weeding fields in all of Wachuang Valley.

Walking toward the entrance to Wachuang Valley, I saw an old granny in her eighties with a middle-aged woman. They were walking side by side out of Wachuang Village. The granny used a walking stick. The other woman had a bag that hung from her right shoulder. They were mother and daughter. The daughter had come to visit from another village. As they were walking along, the daughter said, "Mother, Nuri Village lanes are nearly empty now. I won't come to Nuri Village after you leave and go to Heaven."

The mother replied with sadness, "Few people now live in our village. Most have left. Village lanes are full of bumps and hollows, and overgrown with weeds, because few people and livestock walk along the lanes now. Nobody repairs the lanes."

"It was so nice in the past when I visited you. Many people were along the lanes, sitting, talking joyfully, and warmly greeting me!" the daughter remembered fondly.

The mother agreed, "Yes! How true!"

Then both fell silent for a long time.

I went to a front gate that was open in Dura Ayili Hamlet. I saw two rows of rooms inside the courtyard where a couple in their seventies lived. Other family members had moved to Xining City and now lived there permanently. The old couple had returned just ten days earlier from Xining, where they had spent more than a decade as gate guards at a state work unit. After they were fired because they were now too old, their only choice was to return to Nuri Village. The

neighboring houses had once belonged to their sons, but now the courtyards were empty. The sons had sold the wood in their rooms and furniture before leaving.

I left the old couple's home and went up a high slope. I saw Granny Lamuxji carrying a weed-filled basket on her back and holding a weeding trowel. Returning from weeding, she went to her home. I followed. Various colorful flowers were lushly blossoming in the garden plot in the courtyard center. Butterflies and bees flitted here and there. What a wonderful garden! A big black and brown dog was in a cage in a corner of the courtyard. An electric Tibetan Buddhist prayer wheel was turning constantly, emanating religious chants from the shrine room. The chanting, however, was in Chinese, not Tibetan.

Granny Lamuxji took a thermos and a bowl from her kitchen and sat in the upper courtyard, drinking tea and eating bread. After a bit she got up and fed her swine and dog.

I learned that she lived alone in that big home. Her two grandsons were absent elsewhere all year. Her daughter-in-law worked in Xining as a restaurant waitress. The daughter-in-law said that she wanted a life like most other village women. She assured her mother-in-law that she would only stay one year in Xining and then surely return to do farm and house work. Lamuxji's son was a village leader. His work in this position required little of his time. He stayed with his wife in Xining for most of the year.

I left Lamuxji's home and went to Caojiagou Hamlet, which has about twenty-two households. It is in the southernmost part of Nuri. I saw new buildings half-way up a steep hill. Hundreds of sheep were raised inside those buildings. Some villagers busily worked in the sheep rooms. I learned that some people in this hamlet had received government money to commercially raise sheep. It made me feel a little better to realize some of my people still lived here.

But overall, this tour of my area left me depressed. I returned to my *lasizi* and strolled among the pine trees. Only these trees were loyal to me. My beloved and once loyal followers had heartlessly betrayed me.

I sat on my bed, puffing a pipe, drinking liquor, and recalling

the changes. As I sadly sobbed, tears plopped onto my lap.

Wachuang Hamlet (16 June 2013, Limusishiden).



### NURI VILLAGE

As I sat crying on my bed, I recollected life in the village in its heyday as a bustling, lively community. In spring, after the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, villagers would begin pounding hard chunks of manure with mallets in front of their courtyard gates. About two weeks later, the pulverized manure was loaded on donkeys, mules, and horses and transported to the fields. In the third month, the earth became soft and warm, and villagers then became busy plowing and seeding.

Once the crops were about an adult man's index finger tall, Nuri Village's most important festival, the *bog* ritual, was held on the eighteenth day of the fourth lunar month. This ritual is called Bangbang by local Han, a name that is derived from the sound of drums beaten during the ritual. *Bog* in Nuri Village is held in the village temple, on a mountain ridge in the village center. Villagers worship Nengneng

'Mother Goddess of Children', who invites all the deities and souls of dead villagers to the temple where a sumptuous banquet is held to entertain all the guests. *Bog*<sup>16</sup> chant scriptures, sing, dance, joke, and burn incense to delight the divine guests. Villagers light incense and prostrate to the deities, hoping to ensure peace and prosperity for all villagers.

During the ritual, *bog* are assisted by the temple caretaker and *tiruuqi* 'green crop officers'.<sup>17</sup> Historically, local villagers and guests from near and far came to the temple on horses and in horse-drawn carts. Participants lived in Nuri villagers' homes or camped outside. With pleasure, they watched the *bog* ritual performances, listened to local love songs, talked, and rested. They discussed *bog* ritual details and content, for example, the *fan* 'pole' at the courtyard of the temple, inviting the deities, the various rites for inviting, for example, Nengneng, the souls of deceased villagers, the rite of catching spirits, or the rite of scattering grain and eggs, and so on. Participants enjoyed all the *bog* practitioners' more than ten different dancing styles. They observed the rite of receiving the God of Five Roads and the taking down the pole ritual that signaled the end.

Huge crowds of people dressed in their best clothes, came to the Nuri area. Old people sat together relating stories about their youth. Meanwhile, young people circled together, singing love songs, drinking liquor, and looking for lovers. How nice it was! It was the happiest time in the year!

Before crops ripened, village women weeded the crops three times. A couple of women weeded in each field while singing love songs in Mongghul:

<sup>16</sup> The ritual practitioners who perform in *bog* are called *bog* in Mongghul and *fashi* in Chinese. Only men may become *bog* and participate in *bog* rituals. *Bog* are intermediaries between deities, souls, spirits, and people. Apart from *bog* rituals, *bog* are invited to certain homes, tribes, and hamlets to perform healing rituals that most often involve exorcism of evil spirits. The role of *bog* is hereditary. If a *bog* has no sons, he chooses a successor among his brothers' sons. If a lineage does not produce a *bog*, then it is thought that disaster will befall them.

<sup>17</sup> Men who ensure hailstones and floods do not damage crops during the time they are growing in the fields.

<sup>1</sup>Shda Ghuaisangni purghanwa,

<sup>2</sup>Jala shdasa saina ju.

<sup>3</sup>Amduu ghajarini beeriwa,

<sup>4</sup>Yeri shdasa saina ju.

<sup>1</sup>Buddhas in distant Tibet,

<sup>2</sup>It's good to worship them.

<sup>3</sup>Amdo area women,

<sup>4</sup>It's nice to marry them.

After singing, a woman from the opposite field followed:

<sup>1</sup>Nukuari yerijin luanna,

<sup>2</sup>Mongghul kunni darilasanna.

<sup>3</sup>Nadiji xniilidiji soya ju,

<sup>4</sup>Nige sasiini xniidiwa.

<sup>1</sup>Many people seeking lovers,

<sup>2</sup>Suggests Mongghul are prospering.

<sup>3</sup>We are joyful together,

<sup>4</sup>May all our lives be full of laughter.

Melodious and touching love songs resounded among the beautiful green hills and valleys for days. Sometimes, several love songs were sung simultaneously by different groups of women in different fields. The beautiful green mountain landscape was full of touching love songs. These energetic young people continued singing far into the night. Wonderful! Nuri villagers not only weeded, but also enjoyed their summer lives.

Early in the eighth month, crops ripened. It was the busiest time of year for villagers. Hail was common during this period. The villagers tried to finish their harvest as quickly as possible. Families with limited work-power worked overtime in the evening and into the night.

The harvested crops were lined up in rows of sheaves in fields, waiting to be moved to the threshing grounds near courtyard

gates. A half-month later after all the crops were harvested, villagers began making circular threshing grounds in front of their courtyard gates. They plowed the designated spot with plow animals, or used a shovel and then leveled and watered the soil. Once it dried, a stone roller were used to pack the earth. Villagers then used sickles to harvest the potato vines, which were later coooked. After this, the potatoes were dug up, dried in the sun, collected in the afternoon, taken home, stored in cellars inside or outside the courtyard, and later eaten by the family and livestock.

By the time each family had finished making their threshing ground, the weather had turned cold, particularly in the morning. Villagers began moving their crops to their threshing grounds with big, wooden-wheeled carts, or on the backs of donkeys, mules, or horses. Some people also carried sheaves on their shoulders from nearby fields. Some family members worked on the threshing ground, piling up the sheaves into tall, solid towers surrounding the threshing ground's perimeter to await the stone roller.

Once a family had moved all their sheaves to the threshing ground, they felt relieved because they no longer worried that their crops would be ruined by hailstones or livestock. They were proud the year's crops had been successfully moved to the threshing ground, and celebrated by first overturning big-wheeled carts. They then held the spokes of the freely turning upturned wheel. The bottom wheel was firmly fixed to the earth with stone rollers and ladders. Seeing this, other villagers would put down their tools on the threshing grounds and join them. They swung on the wheel joyfully until dusk. Some villagers and clan members were invited to the celebrating family's home where a sheep was offered to the deities in thanks for such a bumper harvest. After mutton was offered to the deity and Great Heaven, the family members came to my *lasizi* to inform me that they were happy with the year's bumper harvest, and offered me mutton and also burned juniper branches. The family and invited guests drank and ate. They sang a Mongghul song:

<sup>1</sup>Tangdarihgiima, Tangdarihgiima,

<sup>2</sup>Mongghul hanni kuu xjunna,

<sup>3</sup>Mongghul dognangi dolaya,

<sup>4</sup>Mongghul kunni darisuuwa.

<sup>5</sup>Tangdarihgiima, Tangdarihgiima,

<sup>6</sup>Ghualini hgandini rjesa,

<sup>7</sup>Xra ulangi qolaja,

<sup>8</sup>Xra ulani tulighuindi,

<sup>9</sup>Halidan gergi pusighaja,

<sup>10</sup>Halidan gerni turani,

<sup>11</sup>Zhinqan lama sojii ju.

<sup>1</sup>Tangdarihgiima, Tangdarihgiima,

<sup>2</sup>Mongghul khan's descendants,

<sup>3</sup>Singing our own Mongghul songs,

<sup>4</sup>Mongghul people's custom.

<sup>5</sup>Tangdarihgiima, Tangdarihgiima,

<sup>6</sup>Looking deep in the valley,

<sup>7</sup>A yellow mountain is formed,

<sup>8</sup>On the yellow mountain top,

<sup>9</sup>A golden house is built,

<sup>10</sup>Inside the golden house,

<sup>11</sup>Is a respected Living Buddha.

Melodious folksongs, the sounds of drinking games, talking, and joking blended together. The villagers worked and enjoyed their lives year after year.

Work on the threshing ground started after the crops were moved. At about the same time, villagers began threshing on their own threshing grounds. Sheaves were taken from the collected pile, untied, and scattered on the ground. The family's stone roller was then pulled by two horses or two mules circling the dry harvested grain stalks counterclockwise, filling valleys and the surrounding slopes with the sound of stones rolling and the sharp encouragements

of men urging their beasts of burden to walk faster.

After the stone roller turned for four or five hours, pitch-forks were used to separate the straw from the grain and chaff. The grain was winnowed, put in bags, and stored inside the homes.

Grain was ground in a mill, producing the first new flour of the year. Women steamed thirteen bread buns using the newly ground flour. All the family members, wearing their best clothes, would climb to the roof of their house where a big incense offering was made. They knelt as the family head held the thirteen rolls on a triangular wooden plate and intoned, "Dear Great Heaven and all deities, we safely made this year's bumper harvest with your protection and care. We thank you with the new ground flour!" Meanwhile, he threw bits of bread into the air in the four directions. All the family members prostrated three times to each of the four directions. The family head came to my *lasizi*, tied sheep wool, burned juniper, and prostrated to notify me that they had successfully finished their harvest work that year.

During the Lunar New Year, many weddings were held in Nuri Village. Some girls married and moved into their husbands' homes in other hamlets in the Nuri area. Others girls did not leave Nuri Village. All villagers, regardless of age, participated in weddings held in homes. All weddings were performed strictly according to traditional Mongghul custom. Villagers were spectators and participants who enjoyed the folksongs, dances, speeches, the wedding process, and the joyful atmosphere. This was also a place for younger villagers to learn what was said, sung, and danced. The mountains resounded with the rich sound of Mongghul wedding songs and it was also a time to seek sexual partners.

What excited me most took place on the second day of the first lunar month. On this day, village representatives would come to my *lasizi* to delight me. At least one man from each household came, all clad in Mongghul clothes. They first went to the Nuri Village Temple where they performed a ritual<sup>18</sup> inside. When completed,

<sup>18</sup> Tibetan = *rlung rta*. This ritual is held in a home with a *purghan*. Clan members gather during the second to eight days of the first lunar month, particularly on the third and eighth days. Participants bring twelve small

they went to the *lasizi* located 300 meters behind the temple. Here, before the *lasizi*, a big straw fire was made and a huge amount of incense was burned. All participants brought a bottle of liquor and sprinkled it on the *lasizi* altar. Each also brought a wooden arrow, spear, and tree branches, which were inserted into the *lasizi* altar. They tied sheep wool to the wooden frame of the *lasizi*. Everyone tossed *langshida*<sup>19</sup> in the air shouting, "*Larijaluu*<sup>20</sup> 'Victory to the Deities!'" to the sky to summon the mountain deities in the hope that they would ensure safety, fertility to humans and livestock, bumper harvests, fame, and good luck to all those assembled. Everyone prostrated three times to the *lasizi* and then circumambulated it three times in a clockwise direction.

Villagers didn't leave immediately. They would sit together in a circle close to the *lasizi*, drinking, joking, and singing drinking songs. Some young adults started wrestling until one was declared the champion. Some drunk men quarreled and fought each other, but I didn't care. I allowed them to do what they wanted as long as they were happy.

Village women would gather at the foot of the *lasizi* mountain, dressed in their beautiful clothes, admiring and envying each other's embroidered sashes, collars, and shoes. They enjoyed swinging on a rope tied between two big trees and swung singly or, sometimes two people together, face to face. Children chased each other among the women, enjoying themselves.

---

steamed buns and new red and yellow cloths, which are offered to the *purghan* early in the morning. Firecrackers and incense are lit, prostrations are made to the *purghan*, and participants ask the *purghan* about the welfare of the village and its households, livestock, and crops; and individual affairs for the coming year. The *purghan* generally communicates the need to visit certain *lasizi* peaks, for example, Chileb, Durizang, Lawa, and Sughua (Suobutan) in the Huzhu area, on such propitious dates as the eighth and fifteenth days during the first and second lunar months. At the *lasizi*, participants burned incense and kowtowed to all directions. The *purghan* might also have asked each family to chant scriptures in the village on a certain day during the New Year.

<sup>19</sup> Rectangular pieces of paper printed with religious images.

<sup>20</sup> Tibetan = *lha rgyal lo*.

After I finished these recollections, I realized I had awakened from a wonderful dream, and then soon fell into a dark abyss of sorrow. I lay on my bed feeling like my heart was being punctured by a needle. All my past glory, my position, my faithful followers... I had been abandoned by those whom I dutifully protected for centuries! They had abandoned me!

I again cried mournfully, tears streaming from my grief-stricken face.

### I VISIT XINING CITY

I decided to see what my former followers were doing in Xining City. I got up early the next morning and soon reached Xining, where I went down main streets and narrow lanes. As I went down one street, I saw many people coming and going. People were squeezed together on buses, while others were busily entering and exiting through a big gate. Many shops selling caterpillar fungus lined both sides of the street. A number of men wearing round white caps were there. I realized many Muslims lived there. Many Tibetans were selling caterpillar fungus in the shops. When a herdsman went into a shop, several Muslims buyers followed him to check his fungus and started bargaining.

I saw pushing and heard yelling. Suddenly, I saw a familiar person – Lamaxja – from Nuri Village. He wore an orange jacket and peaked cap. His face was dirty. He was pulling a metal cart full of garbage. His wife, Niodoxji, was dressed like Lamaxja. She followed behind the cart holding a shovel. They pulled the garbage cart to a corner of the street where a big rubbish bin sat. They moved all the garbage in the cart into the big rubbish bin.

"It's time for breakfast!" Niodoxji said.

"We've finally finished cleaning and carting the garbage this morning," Lamaxja responded tiredly.

The two pulled the empty cart into an extremely narrow lane between two high buildings. After walking about one hundred meters, they stopped on a corner where two low, simple rooms had been built.

To ensure some measure of privacy, the windows were covered with plastic. They put the cart aside and went inside their rooms. A room for sleeping had a bed of simple planks. Another room was a kitchen and had many empty bottles and a big pile of flattened paper boxes. The couple sold these recyclable items to supplement their monthly income of 2,000 RMB. They had black tea and bread for breakfast.

I learned that the couple had been in Xining for ten years, cleaning streets. They had two sons. One had worked in Xining as a restaurant cook. He met a girl from Sichuan Province, and eventually married her. The young couple then opened a small restaurant in Weiyuan Town, Huzhu County. Lamaxja and Niidoxji had bought an old apartment in Weiyuan Town with money earned from sweeping streets. They planned to work for several more years in Xining and then return to live in their apartment. They had sold their homes in Nuri Village before they left, and now had no plans to return to their natal homes. The other son studied in a middle school in Huzhu County, and visited his parents in Xining on the weekends.

Lamaxja and Niidoxji were accustomed to modern city life, though their living conditions were poor and their jobs were difficult and dirty. They swept an assigned amount of street three times a day. They started in the early morning when the street was empty, swept it again at noon, and once more in the evening when the street was busiest.

I left them and walked down the street. I suddenly saw two women sitting and talking on a roadside step. They wore orange, peaked caps and jackets. They were speaking Mongghul. Their brooms and long-handled plastic dustpans were next to them. They were resting from street cleaning. Warimasishiji was from Nuri Village. The other woman was from Fulaan Nara.<sup>21</sup>

"How wonderful today is!" Warimasishiji exclaimed.

"Yes, but summer is so short," the other woman replied.

"How many years have you been sweeping streets in Xining?"

---

<sup>21</sup> Fulaan Nara includes today's Wushi Town and the townships of Hongyazigou and Songduo of Huzhu County and Dala Mongghul Township of Ledu Region, Haidong Municipality. Mongghul in Fulaan Nara use a unique dialect.

Warimasishiji asked.

"Two years. And you? How long have you been in Xining?" the other woman replied.

"Thirteen years. I've had this job for three years. Before that, I was a gate guard and I also worked in construction with my husband," Warimasishiji replied.

"You must have your own apartment here in Xining, right?" the woman asked.

"Yes. My husband and I bought an old, small apartment last year with what we had earned. I'm happy that we now have our own apartment," Warimasishiji said proudly.

"You're so lucky! I still rent a shabby room with my husband. Do you prefer to stay here or in your natal village?" the woman asked.

"I'm now accustomed to living in Xining where we will live for the remainder of our lives. Many families in my natal village have left and now live here. People there drink cistern water, transportation is poor, and drought and hailstorms are common. Here, everything is much better. Increasingly, men cannot find wives if they live in mountain areas like Nuri Village. Nowadays, girls refuse to live in poor mountain areas. My son is a cook. He married a Han girl. They met in a restaurant where they worked together. I'm lucky to be able to live here! My son and daughter-in-law dislike living in our natal village," Warimasishiji replied.

Warimasishiji's words shocked me. I sadly left.

I wandered down the street, as people walked quickly back and forth, thinking, "What are they so busy doing in these cities? Do they ever rest? Nuri villagers used to enjoy their lives after they finished their farm work." I went on and came to a big front gate. Huge, tall buildings loomed inside. A single-storied small room was built on the right side of the front gate. An old man came out from the small room to open the front gate for a vehicle so it could enter. I recognized the old man – Jaghuasirang from Nuri Village.

I thought, "Ah! He's here! I haven't seen him for so long. His wife died years ago. He has no son and was alone in his home after his two daughters married and moved to their husband's home. He then moved here to work as a gate guard. In the past, he often came

to my *lasizi* and offered me incense," I thought.

The car went inside. Jaghuasirang locked the gate and walked into his room. A simple single bed was on one side against a wall and a stove was near the room's door. Stovepipes connected to the stove passed through a hole in a wall to the outside. A table and chair were close to the window. He sat in the chair and frequently looked out. As cars came and went, day and night, he immediately got up to open and close the front gate. Although barely enough to live on, Jaghuasirang seemed satisfied, with his salary of less than 2,000 RMB a month.

I left and passed through a big intersection. Up above, highways passed over in four directions. Vehicles sped by. I felt hungry and went to a restaurant. The interior was splendidly decorated, had a wooden floor, and many colorful lights sent gentle illumination from the ceiling in all directions. Each dining table was separated from the next by beaded curtains. The people inside could hardly be seen from the outside. Gentle music played melodiously, which made me feel better and more comfortable. A woman cashier stood behind a counter, taking payment from a customer. She had short hair and spoke Mandarin.

A woman wearing a short orange skirt and holding a mobile phone came to the cashier and said in Mongghul, "Table seven's guests will soon leave. Please prepare their bill."

I was surprised to hear Mongghul spoken, and then realized that the two women, Layahua and Zhinyajii, were from Nuri Village, which they had left years earlier. Layahua had married a man from Guangdong Province who had come to Xining to be a cook in a restaurant. They had a son and had sent him to the husband's parents' home in Guangdong Province. The couple continued working in Xining. The son was already five years old and spoke Cantonese. Layahua visited him once a year, but it was difficult for her to communicate with him.

Zhinyajii was younger than Layahua and unmarried. She had a Chinese boyfriend whom she planned to marry soon.

I sadly left the restaurant, and walked down a sidewalk along a big bustling street. I was disgusted by the city noises.

Suddenly, a big building appeared. Its front was lit by colorful glittering lights. I was dumbfounded, and decided to go in and see what was going on. I entered through a narrow front gate. An elevator took me into a big dark room where purple lighting relaxed me. There was a huge leather sofa in the middle of the room with a table and small chairs around it. It was a KTV room. Many small private rooms were curtained off. People sat inside drinking beer, liquor, green tea, coffee, Sprite, and Coke, and eating grilled chicken legs, popcorn, sunflower seeds, dry fruits, nuts, various smoked meats and fish, and spicy pickles. They sang and joked and seemed to be having fun. There was a huge TV screen on the wall of each of the private rooms. People selected songs and waited their turn to sing, or sang together in Chinese.

I was enjoying the songs and comfortable rooms when suddenly a familiar figure caught my eye. I realized it was Layansuu, also from Nuri Village. Her hair was cut short and dyed red. Her face was made up and flushed from drinking. She wore a thin sleeveless undergarment that exposed her midriff, a short skirt, and stiletto heels. She was eating, drinking, dancing, and singing. Layansuu was no longer a Mongghul woman with two long braids, who wore Mongghul clothes, farmed, embroidered, and cared for children.

My thoughts in turmoil, I decided to return to Nuri Lasizi without delay.

## I RETURN HOME

En route to Nuri, I thought a lot. I understood why my followers had moved to Xining and other faraway areas. Work in the Nuri area is primarily agricultural. Nuri Valley residents live on slopes and it is only possible to transport goods by livestock. On rainy and snowy days, transportation stops until paths dry. Trucks and cars have great difficulty reaching the hamlets because of the narrowness and steep turns of the tracks. Hailstorms and drought are common. Access to drinking water is another big problem.

Hoping to gain a higher standard of living, locals leave for

what they believe will be more rewarding work. There are many more job opportunities in Xining. They want to have new experiences, have more opportunities, and meet different people in the cities. Young men find women to marry and then stay permanently in the city. Meanwhile, girls from rural mountain areas marry and live with their husbands in plain areas or cities. Understandably, the girls don't want to live in remote rural areas.

The policy of building a new socialist countryside means that Nuri Village will move to a plain area at the foot of a mountain in Tangchuan Town in a couple of years. Villagers have decided to build a new temple in the new area. The village deity will be moved there. Nuri Lasizi will be left on Nuri Mountain. At that time, having lost my followers, I will surely have nothing to do.

•••

I returned to my home at the *lasizi*, wearily lay down, and recalled the successive incarnations of Tughuan Living Buddha who had visited me and the people of Nuri. During their visits, each of the Tughuan Living Buddhas said to me, "Please take good care of the Nuri area. Your task is very important for our Mongghul area, for the Seven Valleys, and for Rgulang Monastery. The Nuri area is an excellent place with much farmland."

I thought, "I certainly have done my duty, but everything has vanished."

•••

Several years passed. All the Nuri people had moved to live in the Tangchuan Town plain area. They had taken everything in the village temple including the deity. Afterwards, some villagers visited Nuri Lasizi just once or twice a year. I remained, waiting for my followers.

•••

Three decades later, fewer and fewer of my once-devout followers came to visit. I looked forward to their rare visits. Wild grass and wild animals had become masters of the land.

•••

Fifty years later, no one visited Nuri Lasizi. Many Nuri villagers had moved to Tangchuan Town and, to other places all over China. I occasionally visited the few I recognized in Xining, who almost never

spoke Mongghul and lived a modern lifestyle.

...

A century later, all the Nuri people had left the local area. They lived throughout China and even in foreign countries. I could not hear Mongghul spoken, nor could I locate a single Nuri villager. They were lost, almost without a trace, having vanished into a much larger world.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

B

Baghari (King Foorigisigari), a well-known deity worshipped by Mongghul. He is a rival of King Gesar (Ge sar rgyal po ༁େ བୁ ར୍ଗୟା ཛୋ).

Bangbang 棚棚, a name derived from the sound of drums beaten *bog*, a ritual featuring spirit mediums

Bazha 巴扎 Township

C

Changshuubog, a person's name

Chileb (Longwang shan 龙王山) Mountains

Caojiagou 曹家沟 Village, a place name

D

Dala 达拉, the name of a township and a valley in Ledu Region

Danma 丹麻 Town

Datong 大通 Hui and Mongghul (Tu) Autonomous County

Donggou 东沟 Township

Dongshan 东山 Township

Duluun Lunkuang, region

Dura Ayili Village

Durizang (Amiduozung shan 阿米多藏山), mountain range

Duuja Village

F

*fan* 幡, a pole

*fashi* 法师, master of magic

Fulaan Nara, an area that includes today's Wushi Town and the townships of Hongyazigou and Songduo of Huzhu County and Dala Mongghul Township of Ledu Region, Haidong City

G

Ganjiabu 甘家堡, a place name

*ghualini hgandini rjesa*, looking deep in the valley

Guangdong 广东 Province

Gumang, a village name

H

Haidong 海东 City, Qinghai Province

*halidan gergi pusighaja*, a golden house is built

*halidan gerni turani*, inside the golden house

Han 汉, a nationality in China

*hguriden*, a spirit medium for *purghan* (*pram*)

Hongyazigou 红崖子沟 Township

Huarin (Hualin 桦林) Village

Hui 回, an Islamic nationality in China

Huo Qilang 霍七郎, a person's name

Huzhu 互助 County

J

Jaghuasirang, a person's name

Jijialing 吉家岭 Village

Jiransuu, a person's name

K

Kudila Village

L

Lamaxja, a person's name

Lamuxji, a person's name

*langshida* (*rlung rta* རླུང་ར୍ତା, *fengma* 风马), wind horse

*larjaluu* (*lha rgyal lo* ལྷ་རྒྱାଲ་ଲୋ) victory to the deities

*lasizi*, *lab tse* ལྷସି བେ stone pile with pieces of wood resembling spears  
and arrows stuck into the pile

Lawa 拉哇 Village

Layahua, a person's name

Layansuu, a person's name

Ledu 乐都 Region

Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春), a person's name

Limuxji, a person's name

M

Mongghul (Tuzu 土族), Monguor, Mangghuer

N

Naringhuali, a place name; today's Dongshan Township

Nengneng (Niangniang 娘娘), general term for female deities

Niodoxji, a person's name

Nuri, name of an area and a mountain

P

*purghan*, a deity represented in the form of a sedaned image held by four men, or a cloth-covered pole held by a man

Q

Qanzua (Qianzuo 前座) Village

Qighaan Dawa (Baiyahe 白牙合) Village

Qinghai 青海 Province

Qinghai 青海 University Attached Medical College

R

Rgulang (Youningsi 佑宁寺; Dgon lung dgon pa ད ག ཤ ཉ ཉ ཉ ཉ ཉ), a large Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Huzhu County

S

Sangjinsuu, a person's name

Shuiwan 水湾, a place name

Shuulen Village

Sichuan 四川 Province

Songduo 松多 Township

Sunduu, name of a *lasizi*

Sughua (Suobutan 索卜滩) Village

*szang (bsang བණ)*, incense offering, fumigation ritual

T

*tiruuqi*, green crop officers

Tangchuan 塘川 Town

Tangdarihgiima, name of a Mongghul folksong

Tanzi Village

*thang ga ཙང་嘎*, religious art generally of a Tibetan nature that may be painted, appliqued, or embroidered

Tu 土 Monguor, Mongghul, Mangghuer

Tughuan (Tuguan 土官) Village

W

Wachuang Village

Walighuan (Bagushan 巴古山) Village

Warimasishiji, a person's name

Weiyuan 威远 Town, the seat of Huzhu County

Wushi 五十 Town

X

Xiaochanggou 小长沟, a place name

Xining 西宁 City, the capital of Qinghai Province

Xunrang 遂让 Township, Datong Hui and Mongghul Autonomous County

Z

Zankang (Btsan khang), a spirit hall housing Baghari Deity in Rgulang Monastery

Zhao Balang 赵八郎, a person's name

Zhinyajii, a person's name